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SUBJECT: NO SURPRISES IN HISTADRUT ELECTIONS AS EINI
ELECTED CHAIRMAN

¶1. (U) Histadrut Chairman Ofer Eini was elected by a large majority on May 15, giving him four years as head of the labor federation. Eini was appointed to succeed Amir Peretez as Histadrut leader when Peretz was named Defense Minister in January 2006. Talia Livni was also reelected as head of Na'amat, the Histadrut women's organization. Histadrut is expected to publish final voting results in a day or two. Media reports quoted Eini saying that his immediate goal will be negotiating a new public-sector agreement that includes a pay raise.

¶2. (U) Eini easily defeated Leon Ben-Lulu, head of a faction representing some Likud members. The vote proceeded after Jerusalem District Court rejected a Ben-Lulu / Likud petition to delay the election on the grounds that ballot boxes in workplaces would lead to pressure on workers by committees close to Eini. The ballot boxes were placed in workplaces this year in an effort to increase voter participation. Voter turnout was only around 25% -- less than it was in the last Histadrut election.

¶3. (SBU) Eini was publicly supported by most factions within the Histadrut, leading to criticism that the elections were unnecessary and a waste of 50 million shekels at a time when the Histadrut is facing huge deficits. One Histadrut contact said that Ben-Lulu would have been offered a top position if he had supported Eini, but that this opportunity disappeared when Ben-Lulu forced an election.

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JONES